

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO :

DATE: 6 February

FROM : W. P. Bundy

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SUBJECT: Your Memo re Communications Procedures

I subscribe -- as do our senior staff people -- to memo attached. 25X1
We feel you greatly exaggerate the importance of timeliness, except for the area of intelligence related to warning, which I believe is under detailed study by JJ and Co. As a practical matter, speaking of such major changes on an across-the-board basis, presumably would be most likely 25X1
to foul things up and delay the really necessary changes. In other words, there may be areas where intelligence should, and does not now, have the kind of ideal system you envisage. But let's talk about those rather than about the whole of things.

Moreover, one needs to know whether your proposal involves a factor of 5 or 50 in multiplying current facilities and cost. My hunch would be nearer 50, but our main comment would apply even if it were only 5.

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D R A F T

4 February 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR: DAD/NE

SUBJECT: Comments on Intelligence Communications and Related
Procedures [] Memo dated 13 January 1958)

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1. In general the subject memo is a noble and novel effort to shake the intelligence community loose from some horse and buggy practices and procedures. I would agree with the desirability - as firmly as I am against sin - for the development of a communications continuum based entirely on electrical means with sufficient capacity to handle nearly all intelligence information. I believe, however, that the memo would be more effective if in paragraphs 9 and 10 it gave a fairer representation of the existing situation and did not confuse the problem of acquiring information with that of transmission. While it is true, as stated in para. 9, that the great bulk of intelligence moves majestically by hand around Washington, finally to be embodied in a formal publication and tossed upon the waters, significant information dealing with imminent threats to US security are handled in a much more rapid manner. The criticisms of the present situation in para. 10 are only partially justified. Despatches do come in 6 weeks late with interesting info but the highlights have almost always been sent by cable. Our lack of knowledge with respect to the situation in the USSR at this very instant, yesterday, or last week has little to do with communication channels. Although we do need faster reporting and higher volume facilities, our problems with respect to the USSR - and many other areas - are primarily those of acquiring information and analysis of the info once it is received.

2. The memo raises another point in its proposal for what amounts to a direct channel for raw intelligence from the field to the desk of the policy maker. One gets the vision of the busy policy maker being frequently briefed by a staff intelligence officer dashing in with the latest word []
This may not be the intention, but such would be the inevitable result. The US government has gone too far already in being conditioned to react to snippets of "hot" intelligence direct from the wire and pays too little attention to considered analyses (not necessarily a process requiring 3 months, but a process which fits a current report into a broader perspective). Of course, there needs to be a system for alerting the highest levels with the utmost speed to really ominous reports, but the function of the intelligence community in Washington is to evaluate

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~~Raw~~ intelligence and to provide the consumer of intelligence with the best judgements available as to what the raw intelligence means. If you scatter a number of intelligence staffs at the end of teletype machines in the offices of various high-level consumers around town, some central control would be necessary to prevent widely varying interpretations of the same report being passed to the different consumers.

3. Despite my comments in the paragraph above there certainly are merits in a system permitting rapid, simultaneous transmission by secure electrical means of intelligence info to the consuming officials. However, the discussion in paras. 25-28 appears to reflect a lack of understanding of the importance of due deliberation in the process of evaluating intelligence. For the most part, and except in highly unstable and fast moving situations or in the case of enemy preparations for attack, policy should not be made on the basis of response to the last bit of intelligence. Although this may, in fact, often be the case in many governments because it is easier to react than it is to think and plan ahead, there is no reason why the intelligence community should abet such a process. Whether our "studies" should be bound in heavy vellum or transmitted by ticker immediately upon approval is beside the point. The point is that mere "timeliness" is not the only or necessarily the overriding factor in much of our work. Analysis and judgement are crucial to the process and they must not be slighted.